

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, IT

SUBJECT: WAVE OF STRIKES BY PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

REFERENCE: ROME'S 5643 AND 5145

1. SUMMARY. LARGE-SCALE STRIKES OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES IN MANY SECTORS ARE SERIOUSLY HAMPERING AIRPORT, CUSTOMS, PORT AND OTHER ACTIVITIES. THE STRIKES ARE PRIMARILY SPONSORED BY STRONG AUTONOMOUS UNIONS. DEMANDS INCLUDE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LONG-PROMISED BUREAUCRATIC REFORMS. END SUMMARY.

2. ITALY IS EXPERIENCING A SERIES OF LARGE-SCALE STRIKES, PRIMARILY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES. A SIZEABLE PORTION OF THE 1.6 MILLION GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND 300,000 PARASTATAL EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN IN A STATE OF AGITATION, ACCOMPANIED BY FREQUENT WORK STOPPAGES, FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS IN RECENT WEEKS, WITH MORE TO COME. IN ADDITION TO SHUTTING DOWN AIR TRANSPORT OPERATIONS FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS IN MANY AREAS ARE BEING
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SERIOUSLY HAMPERED: CUSTOMS OPERATIONS AND COMMERCIAL PORT

ACTIVITIES HAVE DEVELOPED SIZEABLE BACKLOGS AND THE DEADLINE FOR THE FILING OF TAX RETURNS, ORIGINALLY SET FOR MARCH 31, HAS BEEN PUT OFF DEFINITELY. IN ADDITION, THE SERIES OF STRIKES IN THE FISCAL AREA MAY IMPERIL THE POSTING OF MONTH-END SALARY AND PENSION CHECK TO MILLIONS OF BENEFICIARIES.

3. THE STRIKES ARE PRIMARILY BEING CALLED BY THE AUTONOMOUS UNIONS, A NUMBER OF WHICH ARE POWERFUL IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE AREA. THE EQUIVALENT AFFILIATES OF THE MAJOR LABOR CONFEDERATIONS HAVE BEEN RATHER RELUCTANT PARTICIPANTS, BUT HAVE FELT THEY HAVE NO CHOICE. AS TO THE TIMING OF THE STRIKE WAVE, THE CURRENT ABSENCE OF MAJOR STRIKE ACTIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS SAID BY UNION OFFICIALS TO HAVE BEEN A FACTOR.

4. WHILE THE DEMANDS VARY FROM SECTOR TO SECTOR, THEY HAVE IN COMMON THE FEATURE OF SEEMING IN MANY CASES TO BE UNLIKELY REASONS FOR THE KIND OF LARGE-SCALE STRIKE ACTIONS BEING EXPERIENCED. THE AIRPORT WORKERS ARE DEMANDING A UNIFIED CONTRACT FOR ALL AIRPORT OPERATIONS; CUSTOMS AND FINANCIAL WORKERS ARE DEMANDING THE HIRING OF ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL TO RELIEVE WORKLOADS; OTHER SECTORS ARE DEMANDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF JOB CLASSIFICATION REVISIONS AND OTHER BUREAUCRATIC REFORMS WHICH THE GOVERNMENT--OR, MORE ACCURATELY, THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS AGO--HAS PROMISED.

5. COMMENT: THERE ARE REAL "CLASS" ANIMOSITIES AT PLAY BETWEEN THE AUTONOMOUS UNIONS AND THE CGIL, CISL AND UIL (SEE ROME'S 2485). THE CONFEDERATIONS ARE DOMINATED BY INDUSTRIAL WORKERS UNIONS WHICH BELIEVE, AS CGIL SECGEN LAMA HAS STATED IN THE PAST THAT GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ARE ALREADY ENJOYING DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH PAY AND JOB SECURITY ADVANTAGES. FACED WITH IMPORTANT ELECTIONS ON JUNE 15, THE DC IS UNLIKELY TO WANT TO ALIENATE THE LARGE NUMBER OF VOTERS TO BE FOUND IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR. A SERIES OF PATCHWORK CONCESSIONS TO THE VARIOUS DEMANDS WILL PROBABLY BE MADE TO MOLLIFY THE STRIKING CIVIL SERVANTS. VOLPE

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